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Letter dated 20 October 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Honduras to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to request the circulation, under agenda item 92 of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, of the attached letter dated 16 October 2003 from Mr. Luis Cosenza Jiménez, Secretary of State in the Presidential Cabinet, addressed to Mr. Peter Eigen, Chairman of Transparency International (see annex).

(*Signed*) Manuel Acosta **Bonilla**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 20 October 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Honduras to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Letter dated 16 October 2003 from the Secretary of State in the Presidential Cabinet of Honduras to the Chairman of Transparency International

The Government of Honduras, which since 27 January 2002 has been headed by Mr. Ricardo Maduro Joest, President of the Republic, has been taking steps to combat corruption. However, we understand that in the latest report prepared by Transparency International on perceptions of corruption in various countries, it is mentioned that according to surveys conducted in Honduras, the content of which is unknown to us, the level of corruption is perceived to be the same or worse than in previous years.

Although we do not share this perception, we do not wish to enter into sterile polemics concerning the validity of the contents of your report. Instead, we would like to request you to send a mission to advise us on other measures we could take to combat effectively, not only corruption, but also the perception of corruption. We would appreciate your advice in the difficult struggle against corruption.

In order to ensure that such a mission is duly informed when it arrives in our country, I should like to refer to some of the measures we have taken to intensify the struggle against corruption:

1. Since January 2002, we have had a new Supreme Court of Justice, whose 15 judges were selected from a list of 45 persons proposed by a nominating committee from civil society. The judges serve for a seven-year term which is renewable unless two thirds of the deputies in our National Congress decide otherwise. This makes for a much more independent and professional Supreme Court, which is therefore a powerful ally in combating corruption.

2. We have delegated a major proportion of the State procurement and contracts under the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). This makes the processes much more transparent and combats corruption.

3. We have engaged an international auditing firm to audit the procurement and contracting processes of the executive branch. To date, the firm has produced more than 500 audit reports, which are reviewed by an advisory council consisting of representatives of civil society, the donor community and the Government. The reports are then sent to the High Court of Audit, so that it can take the measures that are legally appropriate.

4. We have established a new High Court of Audit, headed by three judges who serve for a seven-year term. Their term exceeds the presidential term, which makes them much more independent than before, so that they are much better able to safeguard public resources and ensure that public officials fulfil their duties conscientiously.

5. We have taken unprecedented steps to combat tax fraud. The revenue department has closed more than 800 businesses for not collecting sales tax as required by law.

6. We sent the proposed general budget to the National Congress in good time to allow full consideration prior to its approval. After that — for the first time in our history — we submitted the quarterly accounts required under our Constitution.

7. The Supreme Court of Justice abolished the practice of allowing judges in judicial auctions to select the lawyers to conduct the process in order to formalize the auction. Now, the company or individual carrying out the auction selects the lawyers, which has eliminated another source of corruption.

8. We have supported by every means at our disposal the work of the national anti-corruption council, which was established specifically to support the struggle against corruption.

We are convinced that the measures we have adopted have led to a reduction of corruption, but we understand that it is always possible to improve on what we have already done. For that reason, we now turn to you, in the hope that your knowledge of the topic and of the successful practices adopted by other countries will enable you to help us in this matter.

We await your reply, and meanwhile pledge our full cooperation in making your visit a success.

(*Signed*) Luis Cosenza **Jiménez**
Secretary of State
Presidential Cabinet